DEC 27 '55

MISSIONARY RESEARCH LIBRARY NEW YORK CITY

# C H U R C H  N E W S

## F R O M  T H E  N O R T H E R N  C O U N T R I E S

Edited by the Northern Ecumenical Institute

Sigtuna, Sweden

Director: Dr. Harry Johansson, Sigtuna, Sweden

Editor: Rev. Johs. Langhoff, Øster Egesborg per Mern, Denmark

No. 2 February, 1955.

### New Chairman of the Northern Ecumenical Institute.

There has been a meeting of the board of the Northern Ecumenical Institute at Sigtuna (founded in 1940), Sweden, at which Bishop Manfred Björkquist presided:

The Bishop of Iceland, Dr. 'Asmundur Gudmundsson, was elected chairman. It was agreed to hold a conference for Christian journalists and other pressmen from the Northern countries in Finland this spring. It was also decided to hold a Northern conference on Christianity and Justice next autumn for lawyers and theologians, as a continuation of a previous conference on the same subject in Norway. Finally a big Northern ecumenical gathering is to be held in Sigtuna in the summer of 1956.

### Inter-Communion between the Anglican and the Northern Churches.

The Anglican Church has now officially decided to admit Lutheran Christians from the Norwegian, Danish, and Icelandic churches to the communion table. The resolution passed by the Anglican synode (The Convocation of Canterbury) is as follows:

Baptized and confirmed members of the churches of Norway, Denmark, and Iceland may when staying in England and in cases where they are cut off from their own churches, be allowed to receive the Holy Communion in the Anglican Church.

The Anglican Church already has full inter-communion with the Swedish and Finnish Lutheran Churches.

The above mentioned resolution is the result of negotiations that have been carried on since 1947 at the instigation of the Archbishop of Canterbury between representatives of the Anglican, the Norwegian, the Danish, and the Icelandic Churches. In these negotiations the problem of the apostolic succession has been a special difficulty, as these three Northern churches do not have it and have no desire of introducing it.

DENMARK

Christian Christiansen Assaulted in Jerusalem.

The Lutheran World Federation's leader of the relief work among the Arabian refugees in the Near East, Christian Christiansen, has been flown to Denmark for treatment at a Copenhagen hospital after an assault on December 27th by an Arab trying to revenge himself for his dismissal from his job at the Lutheran refugee hospital in Jerusalem.

Thus the assault has no political background, but was an act of personal revenge. Mr. Christiansen was attacked in a busy street in the Arab section of Jerusalem while walking with the general secretary of The Lutheran World Federation Dr. C.E. Lund-Quist.

The Arab had been dismissed last summer together with three others in a perfectly lawful manner, but he was very resentful and had threatened Mr. Christiansen several times. When Dr. Lund-Quist arrived to Palestine the Arab came to him hoping to be taken on again, but when he did not succeed, he left the hospital with the remark that Mr. Christiansen would soon have cause to regret this decision.

When the assault took place Dr. Lund-Quist together with some passers-by sought to stop the Arab, but succeeded only after Mr. Christiansen had been kicked in the head with the result that the upper jaw was fractured in two places.

Mr. Christiansen was first treated at the hospital in Jerusalem and then taken to the Danish hospital at Nebk, but as it was agreed that it would be best if he could be treated by the Danish specialist Professor Husted he was flown to Copenhagen on January 2nd.

It is believed that the fractures can be healed so that Mr. Christiansen will suffer no permanent injury from the assault, and he hopes to be able to return to his work among the Arab refugees in the course of the month.

First TV Church Service a Great Experience.

The first transmission of a church service on Danish television was given Christmas Eve from Roskilde Cathedral and has been characterized by televiewers as a great experience. At the service in this historic church where most of the Danish kings have found their last resting place, the boys' choir from the State Radio took part. They marched in procession up through the church holding lighted candles and singing an old Christmas hymn.

Transmission of a nativity play acted by Sunday School children in the Luther Church, Copenhagen, were also given twice on television between Christmas and New Year.

Coffee Firm Gives 3 Million Danish Crowns for Church Work.

For many years an old coffee- and tea-firm in Copenhagen, Christian P. Hansen, has in accordance with a bequest been giving its entire profit to church work. A recent estimate

shows that these annual gifts have amounted to no less than three million crowns.

Rector to be Advisor to Iron Foundry.

From January 1st the Rev. Bitsch-Larsen, rector of one of the town churches, will be connected with Ribe Iron Foundry as a sort of adviser. He is to be available for some hours every week to the many employees of the foundry, so that they can seek advice and guidance in personal difficulties of various kinds, such as economic and legal problems.

Film on Copenhagen's Church Fund.

Copenhagen's Church Fund, a movement that in the course of the past 50 years has promoted the building of no less than 50 new churches in Copenhagen in an effort to keep up with the demands of the growing city, has now produced an excellent illustration of this special work and its background in a film called "Vi mødes mandag aften" ("See You Monday Evening").

The film is at the same time an action film and a documentary film and runs for 50 minutes; the manuscript is by the clergyman and author Gerhard Rasmussen.

Already at the first performance which was given in December there proved to be a great interest in the film, in Denmark as well as abroad. Requests for copies of the film have come from Germany, Norway, and Sweden. The film describes the church's situation in a modern metropolis and the important work such as that of the Church Fund can have for the solution of the church's tasks.

Larger State Subsidies to Danish Folk High Schools.

The Danish Parliament is at present dealing with a bill proposed by the Minister of Education on the folk high schools and agricultural schools, which will in reality mean larger State subsidies to these institutions.

The folk high school movement goes back to the Danish hymn-writer and bishop N.F.S. Grundtvig, and in the last 100 years these schools, some of which are Grundtvigian, while others have other national or Christian characteristics, have had the greatest importance for spiritual and intellectual development in Denmark.

At the debate on the bill in Parliament all parties approaved the principles involved and it was emphasized that Denmark still has need of such schools.

Denmark's Former Minister of Foreign Affairs Attends MRA-Meeting.

The former Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Ole Bjørn Kraft and his wife, together with Commodore Kai Hammerich, former leader of the Danish hospital ship "Jutlandia" in Korea, have just attended Moral Re-Armament's world conference at Shoreham Hotel in Washington, U.S.A.

New German-Danish Negotiations in South Schleswig.

It now seems likely that the negotiations which were broken off in 1954 between the German national church in Schleswig-Holstein and the Danish church south of the Danish-German border, may be resumed in the near future.

At a meeting in Schleswig in 1952 it had been agreed that the German national church should suggest to the parish councils that the churches be opened to the Danish congregations, and that in the future no rent for the use of the churches should be paid, while the Danish negotiators promised that the Danish pastors would adhere to the church ordinances of the national church.

Further negotiations were to have been based on these decisions, but nothing has been done since 1953. From certain quarters in Denmark it has been suggested that the problems be appealed to the World Council of Churches, whereas Bishop Wester, Schleswig, who thinks that the disagreement refers to theological problems has suggested referring the matter to the Lutheran World Federation.

However, a statement by Bishop Wester now seems to indicate that direct official negotiations may be resumed before long.

FINLAND

Church Service-Books to be Revised.

The revision of church service-books takes some time. The official synod of the Finnish National Church in 1943 appointed a committee whose task was the revision of the Evangeliary, the Prayer-Book and the Liturgy, and it now seems possible that this work can be completed before the next synod in 1958, after being discussed at the convocations of clergy in the autumn of 1957. When the committee was first appointed the then Archbishop Lehtonen was made chairman. He was succeeded by Bishop Malmivaara, who has now been replaced by Bishop Sormunen.

Redistribution of Finnish Holidays.

From now on the Lady Day will no longer be an independent holiday, but will be celebrated on a Sunday towards the end of March. Midsummer Day, the Feast of St. John the Baptist, will likewise be celebrated on either the Monday or the Saturday of the week in question in June. And lastly, a new holiday is to be celebrated in the autumn, namely All Saints' Day, on the first Saturday after November 1st.

Thus there will still be the same number of holidays, but by celebrating either Monday or Saturday these will now include two long week-ends, and there will now be a holiday in the autumn which is otherwise devoid of holidays.

A similar calendar reform was introduced in Sweden in 1952.

800th Anniversary of First Finnish Crusade.

On Ascenscion Day, May 19th, 1955, the 800th anniversary of the first Christian crusade to Finland, which is believed to have set out from Sweden in 1155 or at any rate very close to that date, is to be celebrated in Finland.

The chief celebration is to be in Turku (Åbo) Cathedral with a commemorative service to which representatives from the Northern Churches and from the Church of England have been invited. But commemorative services will also be held in other towns, and the 800th anniversary will be commemorated by special publications, stamps, etc.

NORWAY

Christmas Service in a Tent in the Middle of a Big City.

A military tent, once part of the Norwegian field-hospital in Korea, was used as a church at Christmas in one of the heavily populated areas of Oslo to relieve the urgent lack of churches. In several of the city's suburbs where large new residential quarters are growing up there is a long way to the nearest church, and the congregations are so large that it is very difficult to give people in these new districts satisfactory pastoral care. A few of the new suburbs have got their own pastor, but without any church accomodation. One of these suburb pastors, Ragnar Heiret, former army chaplain at the Norwegian hospital in Korea, was accustomed to holding services in a tent there. Before Christmas he borrowed a tent from the army, a hot-air plant kept the bitter winter cold out, and a simple birch table with a white cloth and lighted candles served as an altar. The tent holds about 200 people and was filled at the service on Christmas Day.

The Church Needs 260 New Pastors.

The Norwegian National Church has at present 950 permanent livings, but a committee appointed by the Church's Clergymen's Association has estimated that 263 more pastors are necessary if the Church's needs are to be satisfied. With a total of 1.213 permanent livings there would be an average of 2.680 congregation members per clergyman - as to 3.425 at present. The committee has published its wishes after a thorough analysis of conditions in each congregation. The greatest problem to-day are the over-sized congregations, and the committee suggests that by dividing the parishes 160 new parishes should be formed.

No Flight From the National Church.

Statistics in the "Annual Report of the Norwegian Church 1955" which has now been issued, show that the Lutheran National Church still comprises about 96 o/o of the Norwegian people. In all, 123.300 people do not belong to the National Church. 30.000 of these belong to Pentecostal congregations, 17.319 to the Lutheran Free Church, 11.570 are Methodists and 8.964 Baptists

The Roman Catholic Church has 4.753 members, and a total of 22.035 people belong to no denomination.

The Annual Report states that out of 63.613 children born in 1953 61.016 children were baptized. 561.000 people took communion, over 51.300 services were held, and offerings and collections in the churches brought in a sum of 4,1 million Norwegian crowns.

## SWEDEN

### Pastoral Letter from the Bishop of Stockholm.

The new bishop of Stockholm diocese, Dr. Helge Ljungberg, has after taking office issued a pastoral letter in the form of a book of 150 pages in which he deals with a number of church problems.

It has aroused a good deal of interest that the Bishop advocates the re-introduction into the Swedish Church of the signing of the cross with the motivation that it is a universal symbol of Christian faith used in many other churches, and that occasional abuses should not be cited as arguments against the proper use of the sign.

The Bishop strongly advocates the erection of new churches, not least in Stockholm, where not a single proper church has been built in the last 25 years in spite of the enormous increase of population which in one parish has increased the number of inhabitants from 19.000 to 113.000.

Finally, the Bishop urges the Church to show a greater feeling of responsibility and greater activity in political matters. He feels that it is unreasonable that the social institutions should occasionally appear to be more secularized than the Swedish people as a whole. In this connection the Bishop voices a reflection that has attracted a good deal of attention, namely, whether it may not be necessary to form a special Christian party in order to strengthen Christian influence on political life.

### The Standard of Living the Idol of our Day.

The standard of living has become the most worshipped idol of our day, says the Swedish Archbishop Dr. Yngve Brilioth in the official appeal for the four days of prayer to be held in 1955. The Archbishop raises the question whether there may not be a growing spiritual poverty hidden behind external prosperity. Never before in the history of the church deliberate godlessness has manifested itself in such a powerful guise as in our day, and in many places in the world the non-Christian religions seem to be gaining fresh vigour.

The Archbishop's sharp words on the standard of living have aroused violent protest in the welfare state of Sweden. A liberal paper sought to interpret the appeal as meaning that the Church is opposed to giving the poor more bread and

ridiculed the issuing of admonitions to frugality, thrift, and submission proceeding from bishops' palaces. This reaction, however, depended upon the fact that the appeal was distributed by the Swedish press bureau in a misleading form. In this version the Archbishop's appreciation of the social development in the country had been omitted.

Commenting on the interpretation given in the paper mentioned Stockholm's new bishop, Dr. Helge Ljungberg, declares: It is simply a lie that the Church is opposed to better living conditions for the poor. Nor are we opposed to a further development of the welfare state, and there is still much to be done in that respect. But man does not live by bread alone, and this truth must not be forgotten in an age so materialistically minded as our own.

Abortion Laws Discussed.

In the past months a lively debate on the Swedish abortion laws has attracted a good deal of attention in church quarters. Stockholm's new bishop, Dr. Helge Ljungberg, recently suggested that clergymen, doctors, and the public assistance authorities should work together to find a positive solution of the problem, ensuring all children, even the unwanted ones, an existence fit for human beings. The matter has also been discussed at a conference in Sigtuna attended by 30 - 40 members of Parliament from different parties together with specially invited clergymen, doctors, and welfare workers. At the conference which met by invitation of the Sigtuna-Foundation and the social committee of the Swedish Ecumenical Council it was agreed that the present abortion laws should be revised, and the possibility of reducing the number of abortions by means of welfare centres was discussed. A committee was appointed for further study of these suggestions. It may also make proposals for a revision of the law.

Sunday Schools for Adults.

Inspired by the good results obtained in the United States by Sunday School teaching of adults, a similar work has been begun in Sweden. The initiative has been taken by a Free Church congregation in Skövde, and so far the results have been most satisfactory. The adult Sunday School is taught at the same time as the children's Sunday School so that many parents attend. Most of the adult Sunday School pupils participate in the church service afterwards.

15 Million Swedish Crowns for Church Buildings.

The Swedish Building Authorities have in the present financial year approved the appropriation of 15 million Swedish Crowns for church buildings, part of the sum to be used for the restoration of old buildings, part for the erection of new churches. As all building work under 100.000 crowns requires no special approval, the total sum used this year for the restoration or erection of churches must be a good deal more than 15 million crowns.

Among the better known churches to be restored is Kungsholm Church in Stockholm for which 1 million crowns has been